

BOROUGH OF TOTNES.



THE



Annual Reports

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

AND

Borough Surveyor & Sanitary Inspector

FOR THE YEAR 1925.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
FOR THE
Borough of Totnes
FOR THE YEAR 1925.



Gentlemen,

I beg to present to you my Annual Report for the year 1925.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The Report for the past year is again an Interim Report; that is, it deals mainly with facts relating to the past year, 1925, and does not attempt to draw any elaborate comparison with the years past.

This follows the directions and instructions of the Ministry of Health.

During the past year the health of the Borough has been well maintained, and this Report is very similar to the last year's (1924) and shows a general average in the results of public health work; and is, as before, a record of slow but steady progress.

The Birth Rate is almost stationary, and the Death Rate only slightly higher.

The incidence of notifiable infectious disease is remarkably low; and epidemics of any serious nature were absent.

Housing problems and plans to increase the building of houses have been much to the fore in 1925; see later on in this Report.

On the whole, 1925 has been a year of satisfactory progress—and no adverse events.

POPULATION:

The Registrar-General, in a recent circular estimates the population of the Borough of Totnes at 4,043, practically identical with that of 1924. The last census was 3,982.

BIRTHS:

The corrected number of births registered in 1925 was 65; viz., 30 males, 35 females. In 1924 the number was 69.

These figures show approximately no

change at all, and do not require comment.

The figure for 1925, viz., 65, represents a birth-rate of 16 per thousand living.

In 1924 a rate of just 17 per thousand living.

The number of births registered in the past five years is as under :

1921, 60; 1922, 58; 1923, 60; 1924, 69; 1925, 65. There is, therefore, no material change.

The record of births in England and Wales for 1925 is 18.3 per thousand of the population; and for the 157 smaller towns of England and Wales is exactly the same rate—viz., 18.3.

The birth rate in the Borough is thus not far behind that of centres of much larger population, and moreover many such centres are growing and expanding in size.

DEATHS:

The total number of deaths registered in the Borough of Totnes in 1925 was 76; in 1924, 73; in 1923, 76.

Of these 76 deaths, 50 were of residents in the Borough, and 26 were non-residents. There were four cases of transferable deaths—2 males and 2 females—which have to be added to the total deaths of residents. The corrected number of deaths of residents is thus 54—31 males, 23 females.

The death rate for 1925 is equal to a mortality of 13.3 per thousand living.

In England and Wales, generally, the death rate was 12.2.

In the year 1924 in the Borough of Totnes it was 12.0 per thousand.

The slight rise in the rate in 1925 may be easily accounted for by the ages at death.

AGES AT DEATH:

Of the 50 deaths of residents actually occurring in the Borough, 27 were of persons over 65 years of age; 23 were of persons under 65 years of age.

In 1924, out of 47 deaths of residents, 22 were over 65 years of age and 25 were under that age.

The record for 1925 is just about an average, and is an improvement on the last Report.

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED.

The number of cases notified in 1925 was 9; in 1924, 10.

Including all cases, these were:—

Erysipelas	2
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	6
General Tuberculosis	1

Total 9

The notification of infectious cases has certainly been better during the last two years.

PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS

(PHTHISIS) :

Under this heading, amongst residents of the Borough of Totnes only, there were four cases of death. In 1924, 5 cases; in 1923, 2 cases.

I again desire to urge the **early** notification of this disease, once a diagnosis can be made, as it is really the only chance for the patient if some special form of treatment can be adopted (e.g. Sanatorium treatment or use of modern sera).

CANCER (ALL FORMS) :

During the year 1925 five deaths were certified as being due to Cancer or Malignant Disease. In 1924, 2; in 1923, 7 deaths.

Of these five deaths, one was a male, four were of females. As regards the total (5), this is just about an average.

DEATHS FROM ACCIDENT

OR SUICIDE :

There were no cases of suicide.

There were two deaths from accident, viz., at 3 months (suffocation), and at 82 years (by falling downstairs). Both were males.

There were two sad and shocking motor accidents (both fatal), but the victims were not residents, and indeed were entire strangers.

INFANT MORTALITY :

During 1925 only four cases of deaths of infants, under one year of age, occurred—three males, one female.

But one was death by accident (recorded above), and not due to disease.

Therefore, for comparison with other years, the figure is really only three.

In 1924, two deaths; in 1923, three deaths.

The figure for 1925 (viz. three) represents an infant mortality of approximately 46 per thousand births.

In England and Wales, generally, it was 74 per thousand births; and in the

157 smaller towns of England and Wales exactly the same, viz., 74.

The Borough figures represent a very satisfactory record.

EPIDEMICS:

During 1925 there were none; not even of diseases at present not requiring notification. As I have stated under the heading of General Remarks, the notification of all forms of infectious disease was very low.

MATERNITY & CHILD WELFARE.

This Centre continued and, on the whole, maintained its usefulness. Health-talks have been given by the Health Visitor and others.

General advice has been given about clothing and feeding the babies; and the babies are nearly all weighed and a card-record is kept of their case, both of their weight and of improvement made in health.

The attendance has not been large; about 12 to 15 mothers (with their children) being about the best, and sometimes as few as five or six. Owing to continued ill-health, also, the attendance of the Medical Officer was irregular during last year, though when absent from illness he always tried to provide an efficient substitute to carry on the work.

HOUSING:

During 1925 more houses were built and more planned than in the previous year, 1924. The Priory Estate has been developed according to plan, and several more houses erected there; in all I believe that six have been completed during the past year.

The details of Housing, as also of House-planning, will appear more fully in the Surveyor's Report.

RECREATION GROUND OR BOROUGH PARK:

This Park as I have said before, is an invaluable asset to this Borough, mainly from reasons of Public Health.

It affords a place of rational enjoyment; not merely for children to play in, but for adults to enjoy organised games—e.g., football, hockey, lawn-tennis, bowls, etc., to their undoubted benefit.

There has been a considerable improvement in the appearance of the

Park, and new entrances, new paths, etc., have been added. Every improvement in this splendid recreation ground should be encouraged, compatible with reasonable economy.

DAIRIES AND COWSHEDS:

There are 15 Dairies in the Borough, and 19 retailers of milk (the same as in my last Report).

They have been systematically examined and inspected, and defects (where found) remedied, structural and otherwise).

The Surveyor will report on these matters in fuller detail.

No one, at present, sells "Graded" Milk, but the retailers have improved their methods, their shops, etc., and made better arrangements for the sale of milk. Several objectionable features have been removed.

The supply of clean milk, I repeat, is absolutely essential to Public Health, and every means should be adopted to ensure it and to enforce it.

SCHOOLS:

All the Schools in the Borough of Totnes have been visited and examined during 1925 by the M.O.H. and Sanitary Inspector, jointly and separately.

In the Senior (late Church) Schools a newer and larger playground is being made, much more suitable to the requirements of the School; and new sanitary accommodation is being built. The Sanitary Inspector will report in detail.

FINAL REMARKS:


The year's work has been satisfactory on the whole, and may be fairly safely described as one of quiet and steady progress.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

H. R. Allingham,

M.B., B.S. (Lond.), M.R.C.S. (Eng.),
Medical Officer of Health.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30192407>

7

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
Borough Surveyor and
Sanitary Inspector
FOR THE
Borough of Totnes
FOR THE YEAR 1925.

Gentlemen,

I beg to present to you my first Annual Report as your Borough Surveyor.

GENERAL REMARKS:

The year has proved to have been one of steady progress and advancement, and several important steps have been taken to improve the development of the town.

In the forefront comes Town Planning, and the Council deserve the approbation of everyone for their wisdom in adopting a resolution to prepare a scheme, although not compelled to do so by the Town Planning Acts. The full benefit of this foresight might not be derived by the present generation, but it will undoubtedly prove a great boon in the future. It will ensure that the Borough will develop along well-thought lines, and preserve the places of historical interest and natural beauty with which the town abounds.

Two schemes have been approved for the widening and improvement of the main roads, and steady progress has been made in the efforts to improve existing surfaces to withstand the wear and tear of modern traffic.

Building operations show an improvement on the previous year, and the Council are to be commended on their desire to provide, if possible, additional accommodation for the inhabitants of the Borough, and it is hoped that during the coming year the new Secondary School will have become an accomplished fact.

Infectious diseases have happily been kept down to a minimum, and it is to be hoped will die out as the sanitation of the Borough improves year by year.

The purchase of the Follaton Estate has loomed large in the public eye, and no one who has experienced the acute shortness of water during the year will criticise this large undertaking by the Council, which will ensure a satisfactory supply to the town for very many years. I wish to thank my predecessor, Mr. R. N. Armstrong for information supplied me when I commenced my duties.

The features which have not changed since the last report are as follows:—Acreage, 1,422; Sub-soil is of a diabase and limestone, with clay in the lower reaches of the town. The highest point in the Borough is 469 feet above Ordnance Datum and the lowest point is .9 feet below Ordnance Datum.

WATER SUPPLY.

The supply of water to the Borough caused considerable anxiety during the drought in the summer, and great economy in its consumption became necessary. The washing of cars, shop fronts, etc., had to be prohibited, and in most cases the inhabitants are to be commended for their ready acquiescence to the order, and their desire to save as much water as possible. The purchase of the Follaton Estate, after a Ministry of Health Local Enquiry, will ensure the future supply of the Borough, as the Council intend to waste no time in the construction of the necessary works, etc.

The 3in. Kent Waste Detecting Meter has been installed at Stray Park Reservoir, and a meter house has been built. It was not possible to run the machine during most of the summer owing to the small amount of water in the reservoir, but once the machine is in full working order it will, without a doubt, be of great service in the detection of defects in the water system.

The town is supplied by a good, wholesome water, obtained from deep springs, filtration, therefore, being unnecessary. Six reservoirs are at present in the Borough; these are served by the springs, and have a total capacity of 553,000 gallons. The normal yield of the various springs totals approximately 70,000 gallons per day.

During the year a small portion of the 4in. main to the Priory Estate has been laid. The remainder will be constructed as the Estate develops. Water

has been laid on to six premises for domestic purposes; in addition, several baths have been installed in houses.

A fair number of water leaks have been repaired during the year, mostly due to defective joints, services, and broken mains. The breaking of a main is a constant event, but owing to the mains having been laid so close to the surface, this cannot be remedied without re-laying.

A new valve has been fixed in Jubilee Road.

During the dry weather a temporary supply of approximately 6,000 gallons per day was obtained from Follaton, without which it would have been impossible to maintain a supply to the town for domestic use.

SEWERAGE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The engines and pumps at the Pumping Station have given every satisfaction during the year. New connecting rods have been fitted to the large pump and have considerably improved its efficiency. A gas bag has been installed for the small engine, and a new water tank fixed.

One or two chokages have occurred, chiefly in the lower parts of the town, and considerable flooding has taken place at times in the Warland area. This has been considerably eased by the construction of a small relief sewer.

The Council has very wisely purchased a sewer scraping machine. This will enable the sewers to be periodically cleared without the expense of opening up the ground at various points, with its resultant damage to sewers and roads.

A portion of the new sewer to drain the Priory Estate has been laid; the remainder will be constructed as development takes place.

The revised scheme for the new 9in. sewer to drain the proposed Girls' School has been approved by the Council, and sanction for a loan applied for. The Working Drawings, Conditions of Contract, Specifications and Bills of Quantities have been prepared, and Tenders invited. This scheme will, in addition to draining the School and the buildings in Long Weir Field, open up further land for development, which it is hoped will be taken advantage of, thereby benefiting the rateable value of the Borough.

BUILDINGS.

During the year two new houses have been built, and one bungalow. Two houses and two bungalows are in course of erection, and will be completed in the near future. The housing question in the Borough is still acute, many people living under deplorable conditions of overcrowding, while others occupy premises which, but for the existing shortage, would be condemned as absolutely unfit for human habitation.

The Council are fully aware of these conditions, and intend, if circumstances, etc., permit, erecting dwellings for the people in order to improve the conditions of overcrowding and sanitation.

In spite of the poor response to their subsidy scheme of £90 to every builder of a house of certain size, and in accordance with certain regulations, the Council have amended the scheme, making it still more attractive, and still more possible of carrying out by raising the figure that the house must cost the purchaser. The Council are to be congratulated on their action, which is a definite step in their desire to see the people better housed. It is gratifying to know that two bungalows are in course of erection under this scheme, with a distinct possibility of at least six others to follow. It is hoped that these figures will be considerably improved on, in view of the attractive nature of the Council's proposals.

If the Town Planning Scheme gives an impetus to building operations, it will have done at least one thing to justify its existence and adoption.

TOWN PLANNING.

Considerable progress has been made during the year with the Town Planning Scheme. Map No. 2, showing the preliminary details of the Scheme, together with the preliminary statement, have been prepared and forwarded to the Ministry of Health, together with the objections received. The scheme was gone into very exhaustively by the Council and well ventilated at a meeting held in connection with the Chamber of Trade. This interest and discussion is undoubtedly of benefit to the Scheme.

In view of the fact that the decision to prepare a scheme was arrived at

some time before I was appointed Borough Surveyor, I should like to congratulate the Town Council on their foresight and wisdom in adopting such a beneficial Act. It will ensure that the historical buildings and associations of which the townspeople are justly proud, will be preserved for the benefit and education of future generations. Further, it will preserve the natural beauty with which Totnes abounds. The Burgesses should rally round and whole-heartedly support the Council, to ensure the Scheme being a success and a benefit to the town.

A bye-pass road has been inserted in the Scheme from the Plains to the Plymouth Road, which will relieve the congestion of through traffic in the existing main road, the cost of widening which would have been prohibitive, besides destroying many interesting features of the ancient Borough. In addition, the land likely to be developed has been zoned, new allotments, etc., allocated, and widening schemes of roads provided for, to cope with the demands and development of modern mechanical transport. Totnes can justly be proud of the distinction it has gained, in being the only town in the West, with a population under 10,000, that has decided to prepare a Town Planning Scheme. The wisdom of such an undertaking will be amply demonstrated in the future.

BOROUGH PARK.

The Park is undoubtedly a great asset to the Borough and is another illustration of the progressive spirit that animates the Municipal Government of the town. Towns of greater population than Totnes would consider themselves fortunate to possess such a fine open space for the recreation of their inhabitants. It is, however, patent that the Burgesses do not appreciate their good fortune to the extent they should, for in spite of the wonderful weather experienced during the summer, the receipts from games, etc., show a decline on the previous year, which was a very wet one. This apathy is hard to understand, and is very discouraging to those responsible for providing such a splendid Park. Such lack of interest is not worthy of the town, and it is to be hoped that the inhabitants will realise this and

prevent the Park becoming a white elephant.

A new entrance gate, etc., has been erected near No. 1 Station Road, with an improved approach to the roadway.

New flower beds and a path have been constructed in front of the Tennis Pavilion, and a new lay-out of beds and paths in front of the Tennis Courts. Seats will be also fixed to enable spectators to view the tennis in comfort. It would be a great incentive to the use of the Courts if the Council arranged an annual tournament.

A new path has been cut from the public conveniences to the gate near the Drill Hall, and a scheme prepared for a sand pit which it is hoped to construct in the spring. An unloading bank has been constructed on the Fair Field, and amounts included in the rates for a new pavilion, and glass screens to the Bandstand.

The Council very wisely, during the year, purchased a motor lawn mower, which has expedited the work of grass cutting, and enabled the Park to be kept in better condition.

HOUSE REFUSE REMOVAL.

The collection of house refuse in the Borough has been carried out by contract as in former years, and very few complaints have been received of non-removal or irregularity. The work has been carried out quite satisfactorily, but the tipping ground is far from satisfactory. The position undoubtedly mars the beauty of the River Dart and the approach to the town. A man is constantly employed levelling the site and collecting paper, etc. When opportunity is afforded the Council will undoubtedly consider the question of providing a refuse destructor, which at the present time is inopportune owing to the prohibitive cost. Considering the many difficulties in the way, the tip is kept remarkably well and free from nuisance.

DAIRIES AND COWSHEDS.

There are 34 Dairies and Cowsheds in the Borough which, on the whole, are in a fair condition of structural repair, although there is still room for improvement.

More attention should be paid to cleanliness, the grooming of cows, washing of hands and udders, dry

milking, sterilised utensils, and a clean milking stool.

It is a matter for regret that in a town in the heart of such beautiful agricultural land, no effort has been made to produce a certified or graded milk.

A large quantity of the milk consumed in the Borough is produced outside, consequently the inspection and registration of these dairies and cowsheds comes within the province of other local authorities.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The report of the Medical Officer of Health contains fully the details of this subject.

I am gratified to be able to state that during the year the Borough has been remarkably free of infectious diseases, which speaks well of Totnes as a healthy residential town.

Several sanitary improvements have been carried out to property during the year, and new sanitary accommodation has been provided at the Church School, together with the enlargement of the playground and the improvement of the surface.

During the year the new Meat Regulations of the Ministry of Health came into force, and whenever possible the inspection of slaughterhouses and meat has been carried out. Several animals suffering from tuberculosis and other diseases have been condemned and destroyed during the year, also tinned beef, etc. On the whole the butchers of the town have endeavoured to provide a wholesome supply of meat, and I am grateful to them for their kindly co-operation.

The iron public convenience near the Bridge has been removed to the Fair Field, re-erected and connected to the sewer. This will remedy a nuisance in this locality.

HIGHWAYS.

The mileage remains the same as in former years and is as follows:—Four miles, four furlongs of classified main roads, 38.2 poles of unclassified roads, and eight miles of district roads. The main roads, on the whole, are in a fairly good condition, and progress is being maintained in converting macadam surfacing into tarmac. The foundations on several portions are, however, in a weak condition, and the necessary work

of strengthening has to be curtailed through lack of funds. This is very unfortunate, as the best surfacing material manufactured cannot be expected to stand up to modern traffic, unless adequately supported. Efforts are being made to improve matters in this respect. All the main roads were sprayed and heavily coated with $\frac{3}{4}$ in. granite chippings in the spring, with the exception of some of the steeper gradients.

The Station Road widening scheme has been completed in front of the Priory Estate, and an additional scheme prepared for continuing the widening as far as the G.W.R. Station. This also includes the widening of the culvert over the leat.

A widening scheme has also been prepared for Bridgetown Hill, from the Hospital to Highlands. This provides for a 40ft. road, made up for most of the length of a 30ft. carriage-way, 5ft. grass verge with trees, and a 5ft. foot-path. Unfortunately, both schemes are held up by the Ministry of Transport through lack of funds. In view of the urgent necessity of widening these roads, it is to be hoped that the work will be sanctioned as early as possible.

The District Roads are, on the whole, in a very unsatisfactory condition, and are being repaired as well as possible with old stone and scarified material. Nothing has been spent on them for some time, and eventually the problem will have to be tackled, otherwise failure will result. Several of the district roads were tar-sprayed in the spring, and re-surfacing carried out on the Plains, Mill Lane, Totnes Down Hill and Bowden Pillars.

A very useful widening scheme was carried out at Maudlin Road, the land being very generously given for the purpose. A small improvement has also been carried out in Church Close, by rounding off a portion of the School playground. The Governors very kindly gave the small piece of land necessary.

STREET LIGHTING.

During the season 119 lamps have been in use, including a new lamp and standard recently erected at Brooklands Terrace. Eight new lanterns have been fixed and five automatic lighters and extinguishers fixed at Station Road Corner, the Plains, Exeter

Road Corner, opposite the Pannier Market and in the Rotherfold.

The lamps were lit this year on Sept. 1st, earlier than has been the case in the past.

Several new lanterns are still required to replace defective ones. This is being done as funds permit.

PRIVATE STREET WORKS.

The scheme for Jubilee Road, prepared by my predecessor, has been carried out and completed. The Council very wisely decided to have a concrete kerb and channel fixed along the whole length of the road, instead of a portion of the way, and using old stone to complete.

The whole of the roadway will be sprayed in the spring, which will undoubtedly preserve the surface.

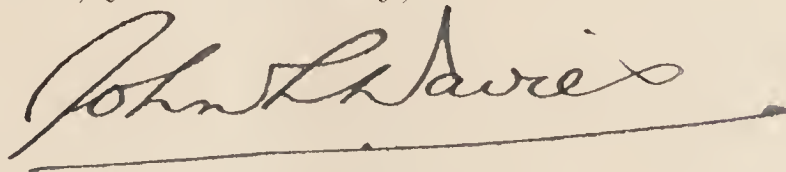
MARKETS.

The Cattle Market returns for the year 1925 are as follows:—Bulls, 168; Cattle, 3,157; Calves, 1,518; Sheep, 9,734; Lambs, 247; Rams, 140; Pigs, 5,448; Horses, 95.

Many improvements have been carried out during the year. The Bullock Market has been painted, and the Pannier Market repaired and painted externally and internally. This has resulted in a very great improvement to the building.

In looking back over the year, my first as your Borough Surveyor, one cannot but be struck with the progress made, and the improvements carried out. It has been my constant endeavour to do my utmost to assist the Council in this work and I wish to thank the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors for their support, and the courtesy shown me at all times; also my colleagues for their kindly co-operation, and the staff for their constant attention to instructions and work.

I am, yours obediently,



M.Inst. M and Cy. E.,
P.A.S.I., C.R. San. I.,
Chartered Surveyor,
Borough Surveyor & Sanitary Inspector

